

The Spirit speaks more often in a whisper than a shout

The Epiphany of the Lord – Year A

IS 60:1-6, PS 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13, EPH 3:2-3A, 5-6, MT 2:2



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1/8/2017

Good morning. Today we celebrate the Epiphany of the Lord. It contains a wonderful truth about the Christmas Season. When we try to communicate a truth, a big truth, a divine truth often shrouded in mystery, we do so by framing that truth in a story. The particulars of the story point to a deeper truth beyond itself. When we look at today's Gospel, we read about three Wise Men. It could, as easily been three women. Other accounts suggest that there were 8 or more. The particular number of Wise Men or the nature of the gifts that they bring do not change the truth that the story is meant to reveal.

When we read Sacred Scripture, it is sometimes helpful to imagine ourselves in the story. Perhaps in this reading we can see ourselves as one of the Wise Men. They have spent their lives seeking understanding and, as astronomers of sorts, looking for meaning in the heavens. Do we not walk a similar path? Like the Magi, we seek truth and understanding. We seek meaning to our relationships and existence. We seek to satisfy the deep conviction and yearning that there is something more. What the Magi seek is the newborn king. Their spiritual journey brings them to a child in a manger. Their journey brings them to an awareness of the Sacred Divinity and they knelt giving homage.

Deacon Joe often begins and ends his homilies with, "God is good, all the time. All the time, God is good." We could as easily pray, "God is with us, all the time. All the time, God is with us." Jesus promises that the, "Father will give you an Advocate to be with you always." *John 14:16* How often do we miss that? Someone once wrote that, "There is no moment so rare as one where, we are where we want to be, doing what we want to be doing." More often, our attention is scattered and we overlook the Sacred Presence of the moment.

The author, Kent Nerburn, woke one morning and paused listening to the songbirds. He later wrote, “We must take the time to stop and listen, knowing that the voice of the Spirit speaks more often in a whisper than a shout.

For spirituality is far more than religious practice. It is a cast of mind, a leaning of the heart, a willingness to see the shadow of the divine mystery in all people and all things. It is feeling the presence of God in every encounter, and seeing the reflection of the divine in the face of every person we meet on the street.

Jesus, in the Beatitudes, tell us to look to the meek, the poor in spirit, and the pure in heart. The Native Americans tell us to look at the elderly, because their lives have walked the long path towards wisdom. They are all reminding us that the traces of the sacred are everywhere before our eyes, and that our task, as surely as performing acts of worship, is to find the sacred moments, hallow them with our attention, and raise them up as a celebration of the mystery of life.

The birds are quieting now. The traffic in the streets, the angle of the sun, or something more mystical and inexpressible has told them that they have sung enough. But the silence they leave in their wake stays with me. Like the fading echo of a church bell, they have lodged in my heart, and nothing could do more this day than their gentle song to incline my heart toward God.” (Nerburn, 2006)

The journey of the Magi is sacred. Their Epiphany is finding an infant in a manger. Our Epiphany is the discovery of the Sacred in a sunrise, a snowfall, a hand that we hold. In recognizing the Sacred, we recognize the Body of Christ. The gifts that we bring to honor him are the gifts of time and compassion given first to our families and beyond in our service to the hurting and marginalized.

Our Epiphany is that God is with us. Whether by the light of a star or the song of a bird, our Creator invites us into relationship. That is our Christmas Joy.

I have often thought of Eucharist and how I am being formed by that relationship. In a crowd, it is easier to recognize a friend of many years. By knowing Jesus in the Eucharist we are better able to recognize him in the Sacred, everyday moments of life.

As we approach the altar to receive the Eucharist, know that we are echoing the desire of the Magi to seek and draw closer.

God is with us. All the time.

All the time. God is with us.

References

All scripture quotations are taken from;. (1987). *The New American Bible, Revised edition*. USCCB.

Nerburn, K. (2006). *The Hidden Beauty of Everyday Life*. Novato: New World Library.